



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

NEWS

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SUMMARY HEADLINE HERE

BILLINGS — The 2010 big game season opened with a few changes this year. A two day early deer hunt for youth began on Thursday and the general season began on Saturday instead of the usual Sunday. The weekend brought mild weather with temperatures in the 50's and 60's. Some areas had light rain Sunday afternoon, but the major weather held off until Sunday evening.

Over the two day opening weekend, the Columbus check station had the lowest overall hunter numbers in the region. Saturday saw just 137 hunters and Sunday slowed even more with just 93 hunters going through the check station. For the weekend 220 hunters came through the check station with 24 whitetails, 36 mule deer, 5 antelope and 2 elk. Thirty percent of the hunters had game. Mule deer harvest was the lowest since 2004 and whitetail harvest was about average for what we normally see on a single day opener FWP wildlife biologist Shawn Stewart said.

In Lavina, the check station saw an increase in hunters from last year and 449 hunters took 31 whitetails, 28 mule deer, 19 antelope, and 13 elk. At 20.3%, the percentage of hunters with game was only slightly higher than last year's record low of 17.3%. Antelope, mule deer and whitetail harvests were below the long term average, but elk harvest was up. Dry conditions were reported in the mountains. FWP wildlife biologist Jay Newell said hunters had trouble finding

deer, especially those with antlerless whitetail licenses hunting on Block Management and public lands.

At the Laurel check station, hunter numbers were up by 26% over last year's one day total. A total of 262 hunters checked in 20 whitetails, 71 mule deer, and 2 elk. Hunter numbers and harvest were higher on Saturday than Sunday. Over-all, the percentage of hunters with game was up slightly from last year at 35%. Most hunters were seeing game and seemed to be satisfied with their hunting experience said FWP wildlife technician Jay Watson.

The Big Timber check station had the largest increase in hunters. A total of 286 hunters checked in 23 whitetails, 41 mule deer, 32 antelope, 14 elk and 1 mountain goat. The percentage of hunters with game increased from 37% last year to 39% this year. FWP wildlife biologist Justin Paugh reported that many hunters were filling doe tags and holding out for a buck later in the season. Elk harvest for the opening weekend was up dramatically from previous years. A mountain goat from the Crazy Mountains was also checked in.

Overall a majority of the hunters felt that the Saturday opener and two day early youth season were a good idea.

Region 5 Check Station Summary – Oct. 23-24, 2010

(The season opened on Saturday and the opening weekend was two days long in 2010. In previous years, the season opened on a Sunday and opening-weekend statistics reflected one day of hunting.) Numbers in parenthesis are totals from 2009.

Station	Hunters	w/t deer	Mule deer	Antelope	elk%	hunters with game
Laurel	(198) 262.....	(14) 20.....	(45) 71.....	(2) 0.....	(2) 2.....	(31.8%) 35.4%
Columbus ...	(197) 220.....	(28) 24.....	(38) 36.....	(2) 5.....	(5) 2.....	(37.0%) 30.4 %
Big Timber .	(156) 286.....	(17) 23.....	(21) 41.....	(14) 32.....	(6) 15.....	(37.2%) 38.8 %
Lavina	(381) 449.....	(25) 31.....	(26) 28.....	(5) 19...	(10) 13.....	(17.3%) 20.3 %
TOTALS .	(932) 1217.....	(84) 98.....	(130) 176.....	(23) 56...	(23) 20.....	(27.9%) 28.7 %

(figures in parentheses are previous year's data.)

Trends in Region 5 through opening weekend of general deer/elk season.

Year	Hunters	w/t	Mule	Antelope	elk%	hunters with game
success		deer	deer			
2010.....	1217.....	98.....	176.....	56.....	20.....	28.7%
2009.....	932.....	84.....	130.....	23.....	23.....	27.9%
2008.....	978.....	124.....	172.....	45.....	14.....	36.3%
2007.....	928.....	109.....	160.....	61.....	12.....	36.9%
2006.....	870.....	122.....	147.....	58.....	18.....	39.7%
2005.....	754.....	99.....	110.....	53.....	15.....	36.7%
2004.....	1,076.....	126.....	145.....	112.....	21.....	37.6%
2003.....	1,066.....	110.....	197.....	49.....	25.....	35.7%